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ABSTRACT

This article deals with three areas of student motivation in postsecondary education: (1) current innovative practices in postsecondary education; (2) the concept of work in a people centered society; and (3) the individual as a synergetic being. Since World War II when veterans proved that older persons are more motivated to learn than traditionally younger students, colleges have been providing continuing and adult education programs that allow for degrees to be earned on a part-time basis and even on a nonresidential basis. The myth that a college degree is a necessity to earn a good living is also being shot down. Cross-country truck drivers, on the whole, earn more money than college professors with Ph.D.'s. Education needs to be changed to train those people who are interested in occupations outside of academic fields to function in their jobs to the best of their abilities. Although it is important for a person's schooling to enable him to earn a living, it is felt that the synergetic attribute of the individual will begin to grow in importance. This synergy can be viewed both in a limited perspective as the way in which the physical, mental and emotional aspects of an individual combine and interact to form a personality, as well as a broader perspective that observes the interaction of the individual as a part of a whole that can focus on society, mankind, the universe and beyond. (Author/HS)

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# MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

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MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

Researchers, methods courses and media salesmen continually try to define teaching techniques, appropriate curricula and a classroom climate that will stimulate a student to pursue the quest for knowledge with vigor and to avail himself of the opportunities for educational advancement that the school provides. Experience indicates that certain ways of interacting with students do bring about more positive attitudes toward school and promotes the learning which takes place there, so that we tend to try to increase the positive interactions and eliminate those which tend to hamper our objectives as we strive for a greater effectiveness.

Although many improvements have been made in the way content material is presented to students, particularly in the use of visual aids and experiential means of arriving at a concept, there are still students that are described in parental conferences or on cumulative records as being "unmotivated." Utilizing the proverbial "leading the horse to water" with reference to a student's motivation for learning cannot be overtly simplified to indicate stubbornness or any other label. It's not that motivation is like an elusive butterfly that defies scientific examination, but rather that the element of motivation is perhaps the most personal aspect of the complex learning process. The student responses that are evaluated in a classroom experience are restricted in time, space and content area, whereas motivation is embodied in the student's past experiences, future aspirations, home environment, peer influence, as well as his own mental, emotional and physical individuality. And yet, motivation for learning is deemed so vital that (to use a parody) without motivation, it doesn't really matter what a student does have but when he is highly motivated, it doesn't really matter what it is he doesn't have.

Since an unmotivated student in a classroom presents a disharmonious situation, this predicament has helped to encourage a search for alternative forms of education as well as to propose serious questioning of mandatory school attendance legislation. This is not necessarily said as criticism of the present educational scene as there is ample evidence that a greater number of students are becoming better informed under the present system. And, I have no intention of joining the critics who give their views for improving the educational process in such a way that it appears that nothing is right about the schools. Therefore, a creation of an alternative where none now exists simply provides a choice for those who may want to pursue a different route. Sometimes just the presence of an option has a therapeutic effect. One insomnia treatment center purports to have 100 per cent results simply by encouraging the patients to stay awake throughout the night as an alternative to the traditional.

However, the subject I'd like to explore is not sleep but some of the dreams of futuristic thought and contemplate how a vision of tomorrow is related to motivation for learning as presently conceived in the school classroom. This vision will concern itself with: (1) current innovative practices in postsecondary education; (2) the concept of work in a people centered society; and (3) the individual as a synergetic being.

Students have often been warned to study hard and to get good grades. If questioned, "Why?", a common answer might be "So that you can go to college

and make something of yourself." Traditionally, for most students, college entry was offered to selected students and took place the year of high school graduation. Study continued uninterruptedly through to some degree level of completion or else the student dropped out at some point along the way with the likelihood that he would not return. And, the student's record of high school performance remained unchallenged as the most reliable predictor of success in college. However, the educational progress made by veterans as well as the occasional "late bloomer" indicated that interruption in schooling was not a dangerous thing but rather the compiled evidence indicated that the older students tended to be more highly motivated in their academic pursuits.

It's been a long time since the end of World War II and the subsequent awareness of adult learning capabilities, as demonstrated by the college performance of veterans. However, financial aid and scholarships for nonveterans remained a prerogative of full-time students who entered college soon after high school graduation (the traditional lock-step). Geographic inaccessibility to a college campus as well as lack of flexibility in class scheduling were also factors which discouraged entry to college for individuals who may have wanted to pursue study later on in life, particularly on a part-time basis. However, the recent innovative pursuits in higher education are deeply involved with off-campus learning situations and are geared to transcend previous obstacles to learning. Although correspondence courses, work-study programs, credit by examination and credit for experience are modes of operation which have traditionally existed within the framework of the college experience, the impetus given the new programs and the number of individuals applying for admittance have already causedmore flexibility within the operational structure of campus-based schools.

Not only are alterations being made in the procedure of acquiring a degree, but a variety of formally organized educational activities in business, government, the military, proprietary schools and anti-poverty programs are gaining recognition towards the pursuit of a college-awarded degree. Thus, it appears that the concept of lifelong learning will become a reality as more opportunities arise for adults to drop in and drop out of the formal classroom experience according to their needs. However, the procedure must be such that a temporary association will be viewed in a positive way and dropping out will no longer be a stigma for the student or the institution.

If learning, in a child, emanates from his curiosity about himself and the world around him, and if schools are established to guide and expand this curiosity, then it seems illogical to ascertain that the schools have exhausted their usefulness for all individuals at the age of 18, 22 or even 26. Not only is the speed at which new knowledge is being developed creating a societal need for retraining in many occupations, but attributes of motivation are such that learning is a very personal happening and that options for making proper associations for those who wish to learn extends beyond the time, space and content of traditional schooling.

Students who may have been motivated to work hard and get good grades in order to "make something of themselves" could be challenging the creditability of that statement at the present time. The U.S. Office of Education prepared a film that was shown at prime time over a major TV network last May which stressed the difficulty that college graduates were having in finding employment. The film wasn't just a tribute to the plight of the economy but had much deeper ramifications. And, it seemed to signify a complete reversal of policy toward higher education. Until this release, the policy of the U.S.

Office as well as the whole education structure has been to openly encourage students to pursue forms of higher education. Statistical tables indicated the amount of increased income one could expect to derive throughout his lifetime as the result of advanced schooling. More and more notices for available positions indicated a college degree as a prerequisite for employment even in instances where the relationship between the work to be done and a college education were extremely vague. Seldom was there mention of equating successful experience on the job in lieu of a degree. John Keats in his book entitled The Sheepskin Psychosis states that:

> In nearly all these cases, the employers are looking for basic qualities, rather than for specific intellectual accomplishments. They say they are looking for clarity of mind; for people who can generalize from broad knowledge; for people with cultural backgrounds. They are quite right in believing that such people are more often found in colleges than anywhere else, although there is a considerable question as to whether these qualities are always put to use within our corporations.

In the Office of Education film entitled "Higher Education--Who Needs It?", Harold Hodgkinson of the research center for higher education in Berkeley, stated that a cross-country truck driver now earns more money than he does, but went on to say that perhaps that was the way it should be. Clark Kerr, president of the Carnegie Corporation, in a subsequent interview concurred, for he feels that society is moving in the direction of scaling monetary rewards for work in the direction of the disagreeableness of the work performed. Therein lies the crux of the reverse in policy. For, by previously illustraing the monetary advantage of advanced schooling, the public perceived this notion within the aura that it was a "better" or more highly valued choice, regardless of the individual's intellectual appetite for academic pursuit.

The issue, as I see it, lies not in the pro or con of encouraging college entrance but in the right to manipulate motivation for learning in this way. The phrase "use things not people" comes to mind in this instance. For, to the extent that education addresses itself to the individuality of the learner so that each person can unfold and develop his own unique talents and style, it then becomes necessary to provide the opportunity for an individual to earn his livelihood by sharing his talents and what he knows with others in the societal network. However, it is unlikely that many individuals experience true job satisfaction and even rarer if the satisfaction with a particular job lasts a lifetime. The truly satisfied individual doesn't "work"; he is engaged in an activity that interests him and this interest coincides with someone's need for the activity so that a monetary exchange occurs.

The extent to which this theory can be realized is limited. Undoubtedly, there are some tasks that must be performed of such a nature that people would not necessarily "aspire" to perform. These are the tasks, then, that ought to carry a high monetary reward. However, just as there are increasing opportunities for work and study sequences, opportunities for educators to take sabbaticals to renew their learning, there should also be opportunities for all individuals to experience alternatives to their normal work activity. And, as opportunities for a variety of educational experiences are made more available,

employers may find it more advantageous to allow a person more flexibility in the role he assumes in a work situation by fitting the job to the person rather than the person to the job.

One of the aspects of the woman's liberation movement has had a liberating effect on men. For, to the extent that financial obligations can be borne solely by one of the partners in a marriage, this then frees the other partner, if need be, to revamp his resources and make occupational changes. For, different phases in the life of a man or woman bring about different interests, different problems, different potentialities, and call for changes in both educational and work opportunities to meet their needs.

If a student pursues a certain type of learning so that he can be qualified to perform a certain occupational role in society, then that education ought to present the necessary experiences that can equip him to function in the chosen role. However, I disagree with the emphasis that has been placed on career education, to the extent that a particular education is limited only to rendering one capable of performing an occupational role. Although it is important for a person's schooling to enable him to earn a livelihood in our present society, I feel that the synergetic attribute of the individual will begin to grow in importance. This synergy can be viewed both in a limited perspective as the way in which the physical, mental and emotional aspects of an individual combine and interact to form a personality as well as a broader perspective that observes the interaction of the individual as a part of a whole that can focus on society, mankind, the universe and beyond.

I don't believe that I have to identify the serious problems we have in society today or to enumerate examples of man's inhumanity to man, in order to illustrate that we're still in the dark ages with reference to knowledge about ourselves and about our relationships with others. Although we've given some lip service to the interplay of the body, mind and emotions of an individual, I wonder if we've given enough consideration to the seriousness of this interaction. Dr. Philip Rice's work with children of the Juvenile Court in Mexico City came to the special attention of the Mexican government when, after only two weeks of a program centered mainly around rhythmic and deep-breathing exercises, amazing progress was noted in both the physical condition and the behavior of the children. Dr. Rice has also examined clinical records of mentally retarded and feeble-minded children and has found that 96 per cent show underdevelopment of the chest, lungs and arterial system indicating shallow breathing habits. The work of Dr. George Hillshriemer at the Green Valley school in Florida whereby through a program of proper nutrition and vitamin supplements, students who were referred to the school because of lack of motivation for learning and who were extreme discipline problems, have become highly motivated. A large percentage of the students have gone on to college and are doing quite well.

Somehow, Americans seem to have developed a chauvinistic attitude that what's West is best. But perhaps acupuncture isn't the only Eastern practice that will be reviewed for possible implementation in the United States In fact, it is already fashionable, for those who can fford the practice, to travel to the East in search of a quru who will, hopefully,give insight into ways of knowing oneself. For, mediation and contemplation have traditionally been an important part of life in the East. Motivation for learning and for living may, therefore, be enhanced through being more finely tuned to the synergetics of the whole person and promoting the proper functioning of all parts.

Values that have been reaffirmed by every major philosophy and religion but have been seriously undermined in practice are truth, beauty and love. Elizabeth Drew of the Stanford Research Institute states that these values correspond to three basic aspects of our nature through which we relate ourselves to our environment and communicate with our fellowmen. Truth is the cognitive aspect; beauty, the aesthetic; love, the affective. Functioning as a unity, it is these that make for wholeness in a human being, providing what is most essential to our humanness. As human beings, we are able to live together in society because, despite our uniqueness as individuals, fundamental similarities unite all men across the reach of space and time. In the quest for truth, beauty and love, we discover that differences, intead of implying conflict, may need one another for mutual support and may thus be harmonized within a higher synthesis.

Nicholas Johnson, the current commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission, has stated that somehow we've got to develop an awareness that life is not confined to corporate madness and that we have a duty to show the alternative to our youth. In conclusion, I'd like to quote another passage from Keats, that is, John Keats:

> We hurry children toward adult life, towing them every step of the way, indulging them to the point where they have no opportunity to develop their personalities or sense of responsibility, pressing adult concepts and adult toys upon them as gifts, and demanding that they immediately use them. But young people are not in all this hurry. A good many of them are properly suspicious of it and are by no means sure that we are taking them in a direction they want to go. More than a few want to grow up in their own way, on their own time.